Rail fare concession

445. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry is considering to give concession on rail fares to passengers with a hearing impairment; and

(b) if so, the step taken in this regard and the percentage of concession the Ministry is considering to the passengers with a hearing impairment?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir. However, 50% concession in Second and Sleeper Class Mail/Express fares is admissible to totally Deaf & Dumb persons (both afflictions together in the same person).

(b) Does not arise.

Issuance of complimentary free passes

446. SHRI CHUNNILAL CHAUDHARY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Railway Ministry are issuing complimentary free Passes to the person to travel in higher Class 1+2 upto 1+5;

(b) to whom these are issued and what are the criteria to issue the passes to travel in mail and express trains as well as Rajdhani Express also; and

(c) the reasons for not issuing the passes for the companion to retired rail employees instead of attendant to the retired railway officers?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) As per the guidelines currently in force, not more than 4 persons are included in a Complimentary Cheque Pass and travel in higher class is permitted only in cases where justified.

(b) In terms of the guidelines, complimentary cheque passes for specific jouneys are issued to eminent persons engaged in social, cultural, educational, sports and welfare activities and to persons on medical and compassionate grounds, etc. The facility to travel in mail and express trains as well as Rajdhani express is granted taking into account the circumstances and merits of each case.

(c) Serving/Retired Railway employees who are eligible for First Class Privilege Passes are permitted to take an Attendant in Second Class who is exclusively employed on salary in the personal service of such Railway employees. It had not been possible to liberalise the existing facilities due to wide repercussions.

Introduction of Cellular Phones on Trains

447. SHRI AKHILESH DAS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to introduce cellular phones on trains in order to prevent rail accidents;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the progress made so far in the purchase and installation of the equipment;

(c) whether the Railways are planning to introduce inmarsat telephone system on important long-distance trains; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Satellite based telephone services have been made available in Mumbai-New Delhi Rajdhani Express, Mumbai-Hazarat Nizamuddin August Kranti Express and Howrah-New Delhi Rajdhani Express Trains. These services are planned to be extended to all the Rajdhani Express Trains by the end of 1997-98. Its extension to other important long-distance Trains would depend upon the success and popularity of the scheme